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PREFACE

Mr. Walter Alison Phillips, Professor of Modern History in Dublin University, published in 1915 a book entitled Poland in which he wrote : "In the English-speaking world public interest in the Polish question seems to have died away all but completely after the failure of the insurrection of 1863. The sorry part played by the British Government in that tragic episode may well have contributed to this state of mind. It is significant of the general attitude of the British public that it has not been thought worth while to translate into English any of the important works in Polish and Russian dealing with its [the Polish question's] more recent phases which have been published and widely read in French and in German versions. It is still more characteristic of our insular unconcern for what is happening on the Continent that the few Histories of Poland in English say nothing, or practically nothing, about the developments of the national life of the Poles and their relations to the partitioning Powers during the last fifty years. Yet it is precisely the developments since 1863 which must be studied by those who wish to understand this question of Poland, to which recent events have given so fateful an importance and so poignant an interest."

Prejudices die hard, and a number of them concerning Poland have survived to this day. Certain fixed ideas concerning Poland existed in this country long before the First World War. There are people to-day who have an interest in depicting Poland as a "reactionary" and "feudal" country. Those who repeat those views, uncritically on the whole, bear no ill will to Poland ; they accept these suggestions because they are ignorant of the facts. They would be astounded if they knew, for instance, what advanced social services the Poles had evolved during their twenty years of independence. In

this little booklet Major MacDonald-Jalowrecki, a Pole of Scottish ancestry, gives the facts to correct the erroneous views on Poland.

I.—INTRODUCTORY

AFTER the partitions which took place at the end of the eighteenth century, and especially after the failure of the last national insurrection of 1863, world opinion was either totally ignorant of Polish affairs or had only such knowledge of them as was spread by the propaganda of the Powers occupying Poland. The systematic campaign of slander and the distortion of facts practised by Germany, Austria and Russia presented Poland to other nations, including Great Britain and the United States of America as a backward and primitive country incapable of governing itself.

Not a few of the lies propagated by Poland's enemies have survived, and still find ready acceptance among the public of certain countries. Before presenting the facts about Poland and Polish life, supported by figures and factual evidence, I should recall to my readers the broad lines of Polish history. Poland was in its early days a country which displayed remarkable fortitude by resisting for several hundred years the attacks of the Tartars and Turks from the East, while holding back the Germans in the West. Poland defended Europe against the onslaught of Asiatic tribes, and saved the West from many invasions. Then, overpowered by her three aggressive neighbours, Poland was divided up among them. Notwithstanding this, generation after generation rose in arms against the oppressors in the years 1830, 1848 and 1863 to fight for freedom. But in spite of the tyranny of foreign rulers, Poland continued to develop her culture, and during this tragic period of her history she achieved much in the

realms of education, social service, science, art, agriculture, industry and trade.

In 1918 Poland recovered her independence. In the course of twenty odd years of freedom she managed to heal her wounds and to weld together the three parts of the country which had been divided for over a century. In these twenty years of independence great progress was made in popular education, social organisation and social security. During these years the country increased its prosperity tremendously, although it had to maintain considerable armed forces and pay interest on foreign loans. These hardships, trials and achievements should be borne in mind by anyone trying to form an opinion about Poland.

II. IS POLAND A FEUDAL COUNTRY ?

It is sometimes said vaguely that Poland is a feudal country. None of the false notions current about Poland is more completely unfounded than the belief that it is a feudal country, a country of big landlords who control and exploit the peasants. Poland is really a typical country of small farmers owning their land. It is, in fact, a country of small-holders to a far greater extent than many Western European countries, notably Great Britain, where most of the land is owned by the gentry and worked by tenants who possess no property rights in it. In some parts of Poland the division of land among the sons over a number of generations has resulted in diminutive holdings which could not pay their way. This state of affairs is harmful to the national economy.

Since Poland regained her national independence in 1918, all the country's governments have endeavoured to secure a fair distribution of land by giving more property to small-holders and landless peasants at the expense of the large

estates, that is those over 130 acres. Agrarian reform has been carried out gradually but with firm determination and must be finally completed after the war. Polish public opinion is unanimous on this point, and nobody disputes the necessity of the reforms which have already been carried out.

The area of arable land in Poland is 61,414,600 acres (25,589,000 ha), of which 16,560,000 acres (6,900,000 ha) belonged in 1920 to holdings of over 120 acres (50 ha), that is medium and large estates. Even the larger landowners controlled only one-quarter of the land, and later that proportion was substantially reduced, for by 1933 only 9,598,320 acres (3,999,300 ha) remained in the hands of the landowners, while 6,961,680 acres (2,900,700 ha) had been divided among the peasants in the form of small farmsteads.¹ These figures do not include land distributed in 1939 up to the outbreak of the war in September. This amounted to some 240,000 acres (100,000 ha).

The significance of this distribution is this : in the period between the two world wars *independent Poland distributed to her peasants* 7,201,480 acres (3,000,700 ha) of land formerly belonging to large property owners. In consequence, after this partition only 15.6 per cent. of the country's arable land belonged to owners of farms of over 120 acres, and even the owner of a farm of, say, 150 acres can hardly be described as a "feudal magnate". At the time of the outbreak of the war, the number of large estates was very limited, and was steadily decreasing.

Let us now compare the conditions in Poland with those prevailing in Germany, the country which has made such noisy claims for *Lebensraum*. Although agrarian reform was initiated in Germany in 1919, land-owners with estates of over 120

1. See *Polish Statistical Yearbook* 1938

acres controlled in 1937 no less than 14,612,200 acres (6 038 000 ha), that is 30 per cent. of the arable land.¹ twice as much as in Poland. The German provinces where large estates are predominant are East Prussia, Pomerania and Mecklenburg. In East Prussia land-owners with estates of over 120 acres held in their hands 52 per cent and in Mecklenburg as much as 63 per cent of the arable land. If Germany wanted to carry out an agrarian reform leaving no estates of over 120 acres, with a few exceptions where required by soil conditions, etc., the reserve of land available for distribution in Germany would still be 13,440,000 acres, while in Poland the total acreage of land still to be distributed is only 7,200,000 acres—even if all the larger estates without exception were to be abolished.

Let us now turn to the agrarian system of Great Britain. It is entirely different from the systems prevailing in Continental countries. Tradition is strong in Britain, and most of the land belongs to landowners who let it to farmers, instead of cultivating it themselves. Unfortunately, British statistics do not give the number and acreage of the country's large, medium and small estates. They merely mention the existence of a certain number of farms, without specifying how many of them belong to one estate and one proprietor, and how many are owned by individual farmers.²

¹ See *Statistisches Jahrbuch*, 1938

² In *British Agriculture*, by VISCOUNT ASTOR and B. SEEBÖHM ROWNTREE, we read (page 243): "When we consider the kind of partnership in agriculture (landlords) we find a singular lack of information as to the composition and distribution of the owners' land. Land is held by the State, by municipalities, by colleges, charitable institutions and banks as well as by private landowners, but, except in the case of public bodies, we do not know the size of their various estates or how these are parcelled out, or under what conditions as to rent or length of tenancy they are held, or by what type of occupier they are cultivated."

Thus no comparison can be made between British agricultural conditions and those in Poland. It can be said, however, that arable land in Britain is owned largely by big landlords, and although the number of farmers who own their land has trebled in the last thirty years, big landlords still control more than half the arable land in the country. Unlike the Polish gentry who usually manages their farms personally, the British landowners generally let them to tenants. In the first decade of this century the number of land-owners who took personal charge of their farms did not exceed 10 per cent.

Polish legislation has imposed heavy obligations on all land-owners, and in the case of inadequate cultivation or neglect, the proprietor can lose his land and see it divided up.

Many of the larger estates in Poland consist chiefly of forest or waste land with poor soil. Nevertheless, they give employment to over a million persons, not counting the labourers hired at harvest time. There are also many seasonal workers hired for a period of eight or nine months. It is obvious that even when agrarian reform in Poland is complete after the war, there will still be many landless and unemployed peasants. They can only be given employment in industry in the towns. This is why the development of industry is a vital necessity for Poland.

III.—POLISH INDUSTRY

Until the middle of the nineteenth century Poland was an almost exclusively agricultural country, with no industries other than salt mines, coal and ore mines, and a number of handicrafts. Prince Drucki-Lubecki, Minister of Finance of the Kingdom of Poland, which under Russian rule was granted a measure of autonomy after the Treaty of Vienna of 1815,

initiated an industrial policy. He encouraged the working of the coal mines in the South of the country. The textile industry of Lodz was assisted by the protective tariffs of the Russian Empire. The iron, engineering and allied industries were also developed about this time.

The part of Poland which was under Prussian occupation was deliberately kept purely agricultural. The only exception was Silesia, which became a highly industrialised region, thanks to its wealth in coal, zinc and iron ore. Owing to the deliberate policy of the Austrian Government that part of Poland which was under its rule had practically no industry until the discovery of the Carpathian oil-fields. Generally speaking, the occupying powers did not favour the development of industry in Poland because they feared it might become a dangerous competitor to their own.

With the liberation of the country in 1918 a new situation arose. The unification of the three hitherto separated parts of Poland opened up new possibilities. The creation of new industries was necessary, if only to employ the peasants for whom there was not sufficient land. The obstacles were serious: lack of home capital, inadequate credit and insufficient technical training. Nevertheless, Polish industry made considerable progress.

In 1921, only 10.3 per cent. of the gainfully employed population was engaged in mining and industry, while 72.3 per cent was employed in agriculture. In 1931, after only ten years, the proportion had changed in the following ratio: 16.6 per cent engaged in mining and industry, and 61.9 per cent in agriculture. As to the percentage of population—including the families of workers—dependent on mining and industry, it increased from 15.4 per cent in 1921 to 19.4 per cent in 1931, while the number of people dependent on

agriculture decreased from 63.8 per cent in 1921 to 60.6 per cent in 1931.¹ The shifting of the population continued in subsequent years, and although no data are available for 1939, there is no doubt that the proportion of the population employed in industry had further increased, for a number of new industries were started in that period.

In 1929, the total value of Poland's production, both agricultural and industrial, amounted to 19,000 million zlotys, of which 13,000 million was the share of agriculture (68 per cent). In 1938, the proportion had changed, and the value of the nation's industrial production was approximately equal to the value of the agricultural production.

Poland is still a predominantly agricultural country, but it has a rapidly growing industry, which is already on its way to attaining equality with agriculture. The further development of industry is an indispensable condition for the prosperity of the country.

IV—THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF POLAND

Poland's reserve of coal is estimated at 161,000 million tons. After Great Britain and Germany, this is the highest reserve in Europe. The country's potential of hydraulic power is 3.7 million H.P., which is more than that of either Switzerland or Yugoslavia. Poland has also potassium salts, rock salt, zinc, lead, iron ore and oil.

Although the soil of Poland is generally not very fertile, two-thirds of the total area of the country is arable land, which is a high proportion. The flatness of most parts of the country favours agriculture. About 22 per cent. of the area

¹ These figures are taken from the official data of the Chief Statistical Office in Warsaw.

of the country is forest, which is well over the average for Europe.

The geographical position of Poland, although strategically unfavourable, is economically advantageous. Assuming normal trade conditions in Europe, Poland would have great business opportunities for trade between the West and the East, as well as between North and South, owing to its central position on the Continent. The existing waterways, which could easily be improved, are suitable for transit traffic of this kind.

The two ports on the Baltic coast—Gdynia and Gdansk (Danzig)—are Poland's natural doorways to Northern and Western Europe, as well as to the rest of the world. They provide a link with foreign nations not only for Poland, but for a large section of Central Europe as well. After the improvement and linking up of the existing waterways, these ports will also be able to serve certain parts of South-Eastern Europe.

Poland has a plentiful supply of skilled and intelligent labour, owing to its high birth rate. In the last five years before the war (1934-1939)—the net annual increase of population amounted 11.6 per 1,000—a rate higher than in any other European country with the exception of Holland and probably Russia.

The basic cause of Poland's economic under-development is the fact that it was occupied and divided up during a period of more than a hundred years by three foreign powers. These powers held back progress in Poland and exploited the country. Economic development was retarded: home capital did not have time to accumulate, while foreign credit was extended only in inadequate amounts and on unfavourable terms. The war of 1914-18 ravaged most of the country, and the

independent Poland which arose from the peace had to make good war damage as well as remedy the bad effects of a century of oppression and neglect. Owing to the insufficient development of industry, the surplus population could not find employment in towns, and in consequence many of the nation's ablest citizens were obliged to emigrate—either permanently overseas, or temporarily to some other European country.

This situation which still existed to some extent at the outbreak of the war in 1939 could be completely changed by developing industry in Poland and returning to her East Prussia and Silesia—Polish provinces which Germany kept after the last war. The return of East Prussia would give Poland an adequate access to the sea, while the industry of Silesia would provide employment for hundreds of thousands of men and increase the prosperity of the whole country.

V—SOCIAL AND LABOUR LEGISLATION

When the second World War broke out, Poland's social legislation was among the most advanced in the world. In the twenty years of Poland's independence her social legislation dealt with practically all aspects of the labour question. Only two important questions still required legislative settlement : piece work at home and minimum wages. All other problems were regulated by law : working hours, labour safety and hygiene, prevention of occupational diseases, conditions of work for the Gdynia stevedores, group labour contracts, labour disputes in industry, commerce and agriculture, and even the conditions of work for house porters. There were special labour tribunals, an extension of social insurance, insurance against unemployment and the latest innovation which could not be carried into effect owing to the outbreak of war : social insurance tribunals.

The law of December 1919 introduced the eight-hour working day and the 46-hour week, which was later modified by a law in 1933 to a 48 hour week. The law prohibited overtime, night work and work on Sundays and holidays. An employer desiring to carry on work at such times had to apply for a special license from a labour inspector. In the coal-mining industry, the working day for men engaged in work underground was limited by the law of 1937 to seven hours, including the time required for descending to the pit and leaving it. For particularly strenuous or dangerous mining work the working time was restricted to six hours, including descent to and ascent from the pit. Miners employed on surface tasks worked seven hours per day, and the supervisory personnel eight hours.

A law passed in 1932 introduced holidays with pay for persons engaged in industry and commerce. Manual workers were entitled to eight days' holiday a year, and after three years' work with one firm to fifteen days. Employees under age—that is from 15 to 18—had the right to fourteen days' holiday every year. Clerical employees were entitled to two weeks' holiday for every six months of work, or one month a year.

The law regulating the conditions of work of adolescents and women—passed in 1924 and revised in 1931—prohibited the employment of children under fifteen in accordance with the principle laid down by the Constitution. The employment of adolescents between 15 and 18 was made subject to numerous conditions. The use of boys and girls in this age group for physically strenuous work which might endanger their health or be morally undesirable, was prohibited. Adolescent workers were medically examined before being engaged, and could only be employed with a doctor's certificate to the effect

that the work would not be harmful to them. Even then they had to be periodically examined to check the effect of the work on their health. Every adolescent worker was obliged to attend compulsory educational courses, for which the employer had to allow six hours a week free time with pay. The employment of adolescents without payment was prohibited, as well as the charging of premiums for apprenticeship. Adolescents were not, under any conditions whatsoever, allowed to work overtime, or to do night work or work on Sundays or holidays. The same conditions applied to tradesmen's apprentices under eighteen years of age.

Under Poland's advanced social legislation, women are not allowed to be employed under the surface in pits or in work of a hard physical kind, or in any work which might be dangerous to life, health or morals. Night work for women was permitted only in very exceptional circumstances. Special regulations forbade the employment in certain kinds of work of women in a state of pregnancy over six months.

In Polish law a woman was allowed to discontinue work six weeks before and six weeks after her confinement. Employers were prohibited from discharging a woman during that period, or on account of her pregnancy. As long as her child required feeding, the woman employee was allowed two intervals in her work of half an hour each for feeding her baby. The time used for that purpose was paid for as ordinary working time. Firms employing over a hundred women were compelled by law to establish and maintain nurseries for children.

The law of 1928 laid down various regulations for workers' safety, the prevention of accidents at work and occupational diseases.

VI.—EDUCATION

During the long period of foreign occupation national education suffered considerably. To realise the magnitude of the task with which independent Poland was faced in 1918, it should be borne in mind that during the nineteenth century, Polish schools existed only in the provinces under Austrian administration. In Russian and Prussian occupied Poland teaching was allowed only in the Russian and German languages ; the secret Polish schools were suppressed. The Russian government did not allow Polish schools until 1905. As Russian legislation did not provide for compulsory education, there was a good deal of illiteracy among the peasants. The Government of liberated Poland had to organise an entirely new educational system.

During her twenty years of independence the Polish government established 23,722 elementary schools for children between the ages of seven and fourteen. In the year 1937-1938, 4,351,000 children attended these schools. Attached to them were 23,604 libraries and reading-rooms. For children of from four to seven, there were 1,651 kindergartens, not counting ordinary nurseries. There was an Institute of Special Pedagogy and schools for backward or abnormal children (12,300 pupils). There were also special schools for blind and deaf and dumb children, as well as for cripples and mental defectives. An Institute of Mental Hygiene was created which looked after nervous and psychologically unbalanced children.

In the year 1937-1938, there were 722 secondary schools with 221,200 pupils. There were also 74 teachers' colleges or normal schools and 346 teachers' libraries. The teachers were organised in three unions.

Before 1911, only two Polish universities were allowed to exist: those of Cracow and Lwów. There was also a College of Engineering in Lwów. In 1938-39 there were in Poland six Universities, two Colleges of Engineering and nineteen other colleges of academic standard. There were also 314 learned societies and 117 museums.

Spare time education for adults and adolescents was also organised by the Government, by municipalities and by private societies. In 1936-37 there were 7,303 afternoon and evening courses, with 12,026 lectures and 110,379 pupils. Over 60 regular evening schools held 358 courses, which were attended by 6,711 persons. There were also 599 so-called Sunday universities with popular lectures.

The Polish educational system also included what were called popular universities, with 250 various courses for adults. The two types of universities were attended by 10,231 persons. People's Houses to the number of 927—most of them rural centres—housed groups for cultural activity, with libraries, amateur theatres, reading rooms and lecture rooms, as well as being headquarters for various other social activities. There were 10,146 amateur theatrical companies and 6,131 choirs. Educational work was also carried on by large private organisations.

The Polish White Cross carried on educational work in the army, so that all recruits reached a certain elementary standard of education, and many of them were taught trades before leaving the ranks. The Polish White Cross also organised and maintained soldiers' homes, reading rooms, cinemas, amateur theatricals and choirs. It had 424 libraries with 1,103,000 books and 300 film-projecting sets.

Technical education and training had also been badly neglected by the governments of the foreign powers which

had occupied Poland until 1918. An ignorant, purely agricultural Poland was what they wanted. Though 60 per cent of the population was employed in agriculture, there was not enough land for all of them to work on—not even if the most comprehensive agrarian reforms were carried out. It was therefore necessary to change the occupational structure of the country, transferring as many people as possible to industry, crafts and trade. This necessitated the establishment of numerous schools of various crafts and trades, as well as of applied art. Special schools were also needed for teaching modern methods of agriculture and horticulture, including associated industries such as the dairy industry, food preservation, canning, etc. Scientific housekeeping and dietary schools, with hygiene courses, were organised in many places.

In the year 1937-1938 there were 717 trade schools, with 1,216 different departments for special crafts and branches of industry. There were also 625 technical libraries attached to these schools, and 152 popular agricultural schools. The institutes of crafts and applied art were based on the tradition of Polish folk art and folk lore which they maintained and enriched.

Additional technical training for young workers was introduced by the law of 1921, protecting the rights of women and adolescents as employees. Every adolescent (15-18) had to be given by his employer six hours per week for study, and he or she was paid for these hours as for ordinary working time. Later, it was found more practicable to give one free day per week with pay. There were 611 schools for such supplementary training, attended by 976,000 young workers.

In 1937 the Institute of Clerical Employees inaugurated the training and re-education of adults who could not find employment in their original profession.

In all the secondary schools manual work was one of the subjects of the curriculum. This was done in order to promote a closer understanding between the intellectual groups and the manual workers. The boys and girls were taught the rudiments of joinery, engineering, electrical engineering, glass-working, book-binding, basket-making, dress-making and embroidery. In all the schools there were teachers trained by the Institute of Manual Labour.

In 1938 the Labour Service Act made it compulsory for all boys passing their matriculation at the end of the secondary school term to serve four weeks in the road-building squads of the *Junak* organisation. The state-organised *Junak* was intended mainly for unemployed youths between the ages of 18 and 21 who were quartered at government expense. In the winter they followed various courses of instruction, while in the summer they were employed on outdoor public works. The four weeks service of the matriculation students in the ranks of the *Junak* gave them an opportunity to make direct contact with working class youths.

Various social organisations had their own vocational schools and courses, notably agricultural courses for young farmers. Agricultural shows and competitions were also organised.

VII.—NATIONAL MINORITIES

The university of Cracow, immediately after its foundation in the fourteenth century, became the refuge of all European scholars expelled from their own countries for religious, scientific or artistic nonconformity. Hermann Aubin, professor of history at the German university of Breslau, has written in his books that the German settlers who came to Poland in the Middle Ages were attracted mainly by Polish

tolerance and by the freedom of thought and speech which they found in Poland.

The Jews, persecuted all over Europe, were granted in Poland many privileges, the earliest of them dating back to the years 1264 and 1365. The severe sentence of the Congress of Constance on Jan Hus was opposed by the Polish Catholic clergy, which did not favour the savage repression of religious views differing from their own. The Hussites, persecuted in Bohemia, found safety in Poland.

A royal decree of 1563 gave full freedom and protection to the partisans of the Reformation. The Papal nuncio wrote to Rome about that time, expressing his displeasure that the Poles did not allow any coercion in matters of religion, and relied entirely on persuasion. Dr. K. Volkei, the eminent German historian, wrote in his book *Tolerance and Intolerance*: "As far as the treatment of Protestants was concerned, and in matters of freedom of thought and religion, Poland held the first place in Europe at the time of the Reformation."

The laws of Poland which protected the Jews and the Protestants extended the principle of equality also to members of the Eastern Church. The Ruthenians of the Greek Catholic rite, for instance were admitted to the Polish parliament. The act of Polish-Lithuanian Union of 1569 specifically provided for freedom of religion. This ancient tradition of tolerance was confirmed by the Constitution of May 1791, and later by the Constitution of modern Poland.

In the past there were of course no problems of nationality such as exist to-day. Under the Polish-Lithuanian Union of 1569, the principle of complete equality of languages was fully recognised. The population of the Grand Duchy of

Lithuania, incidentally used the White Ruthenian and Ruthenian language to a far greater extent than Lithuanian proper. The upper classes even adopted the Polish language—not as the result of any pressure or compulsion, but simply in consequence of the natural penetration of Polish culture and of social contacts with the Poles. The Cossack wars were not national wars, but rather social revolutions against both Polish and Ruthenian nobility. They were in fact the only disturbances of this kind recorded in Polish history.

After 1918, the Ukrainian (Ruthenian) minority in Poland developed its life on a scale which it had never enjoyed before. The Polish policy was based on the idea that the minorities should not be deprived of their national attributes, but that they should be loyal to the Polish state, while maintaining their individual characteristics. Mistakes were no doubt made in the practical application of this rule, but they were due to the complications and intricacies of the Ukrainian problem in Poland. Errors were also committed by the Ukrainian leaders.

As the national consciousness of the Ukrainian population developed, the leaders of this minority made demands which were often impossible to satisfy for financial reasons, or which threatened to serve the interests of foreign powers by endangering the security of the state through foreign intrigues.

In the neighbouring totalitarian countries, on the contrary, the national life of the minorities was suppressed and driven underground. The paradoxical result was this: that a superficial foreign observer could easily believe that the minority problems of Poland were more acute than those of the neighbouring countries, because the minorities in Poland were free to express their views and grievances, while those of neighbouring countries were held down by a ruthless terror

and therefore appeared on the surface to be calm and contented.

The Polish Constitution was based on the principle of complete equality for all citizens, irrespective of race, language, ethnical origin or religion. Members of the national minorities enjoyed full civic rights, including the right to vote for their own candidates for Parliament and for local government bodies.

The national minorities had also the right to teach in their own language, and even to have schools with their own language text-books at the expense of the State. The text-books for such schools were published by the minority organisations themselves and teachers of the same nationality.

The educational facilities enjoyed by the Ukrainians in Poland were described by the Ukrainian ex-deputy Pelenski writing in the *Kiayivski Visti* of October 19, 1941. This part of the country was already under German occupation, and the Ukrainian writer had no reason to flatter the Polish authorities. He stated that there were in Poland before September 1939 seven State secondary schools using the Ukrainian language, eight normal schools and 5,000 Ukrainian and bi-lingual elementary schools. He also referred to the academic Ukrainian institutions in Poland, the Theological Academy in Lwów, the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Warsaw, the ecclesiastical colleges of Stanisławów, Pizemyśl and Krzemieniec and the five Ukrainian chairs at the Warsaw University, as well as those at the Universities of Cracow and Lwów. Pelenski also referred to the development of Ukrainian vocational schools in Poland. This was the testimony of a Ukrainian writing under German occupation about the educational facilities offered by the Polish Government to his kinsmen.

Pelenski's figures, however, were not quite correct. The Ukrainians possessed 21 gymnasia and 21 lyceums (secondary schools). There were 161 exclusively Ukrainian elementary schools and 3,061 bi-lingual schools, as well as 2,037 schools in which Ukrainian was taught as one of the subjects of the curriculum.

The Polish Government not only allowed the national minorities to establish and develop their own educational, cultural, social and economic organisations, but actually supported with State funds the more important of them. For instance, the Ukrainian Research Institute, the Judaist Institute in Warsaw and the White Ruthenian Museum in Wilno received grants from the Polish Treasury.

VIII.—THE JEWISH PROBLEM

The Jewish problem in Poland can be appreciated only in historical perspective. At the time when the Jews were being persecuted all over Europe they found safety and protection in Poland. *Chambers' Encyclopaedia* (1926 edition, vol. VI, p. 335) described the situation in some detail. In England the first anti-Jewish disturbances started under Richard Coeur de Lion, and a hundred years later, in 1290, Jews were expelled from Britain. The edict of expulsion remained in force for over 300 years. In Germany, France and Spain there were massacres of Jews, at first at the time of the crusades, and later on account of the Black Plague in the middle of the fourteenth century. "They were killed and burnt by the thousand, and their tribe almost disappeared from Germany," wrote *Chambers' Encyclopaedia*. "They were, however, treated more humanely in Poland and Lithuania, so that after 1348 the number of Jews in these countries was considerably increased by the arrival of refugees from Germany and Switzerland."

In the following centuries the Jews continued to be persecuted throughout Europe. In the fifteenth century they were expelled from Switzerland, while in Spain, after a new series of massacres, Ferdinand and Isabella issued in 1492 a decree expelling from the country within four months all those who did not accept Christianity. These Jews were strictly prohibited to take any gold or silver out of the country. Practically all countries were closed to them. In the sixteenth century—continues *Chambers' Encyclopaedia*—the Jews were expelled from Bavaria and Brandenburg. Throughout the seventeenth century and in the first half of the eighteenth century all the German Governments oppressed them with increasing severity. “The year 1880 was marked by a strong return of anti-Jewish feeling, notably in Berlin.”

Since the Jews were being treated better in Poland than anywhere else, it is not surprising that their number there increased more than in other countries. It is to be observed, moreover, that Tsarist Russia issued in 1882 a decree prohibiting the residence of Jews in Russia proper, with the result that a number of Russian Jews so called *Litvaks*—some sources give 2 millions—were driven westwards into the Polish provinces then under Russian occupation.

Before the present war the Government of independent Poland granted Polish citizenship to 600,000 Jews who did not possess it before, thus further increasing the percentage of Jews in the country. Finally, the Germans expelled to Poland, soon after occupying it in 1939, the Jews remaining in Germany. Even before 1939, the percentage of Jews in Poland was about ten per cent while in some towns it reached as high a figure as 30 per cent.

These facts prove that :

- (1) There has been no racial anti-semitism in Poland.

(2) The Jewish problem in Poland appeared as a consequence of the persecution of Jews in other countries which caused many to take refuge in Poland.

All the Polish Constitutions have consistently recognised the equality of all the citizens, irrespective of race or creed. The present Polish Government in London adheres to the principle with regard to the Jewish problem. Equal rights and equal duties.

To understand the situation of the Jews in Poland, one should realise not only that they are concentrated there in larger numbers than in any other country, but also that the social, economic, cultural and national characteristics of Polish Jewry are peculiar and different from those elsewhere. Unlike the Jews of Western Europe and America, the Jews of Poland form an entirely separate community within the nation—with different customs, different social and professional status, with a language of their own and a national consciousness different from that of the rest of the population. In recent population censuses, the Jews generally wrote themselves down under the heading "Nationality" as "Jewish". Only a few of them called themselves Poles.

The peculiar position of the Jews in the economic life of Poland has further complicated the economic-agricultural problem. The ideal for any country is to strike a balance between agriculture and industry, with the right proportion of population employed in each. In France, for example, 34 per cent of the population lives on agriculture; 62 per cent on commerce and industry, while 3.4 per cent is employed in other professions. In Poland, the latest corresponding figures were 60.6 per cent agriculture, 26 per cent commerce and industry, other occupations 12.6 per cent.

This economic social structure is unsatisfactory, for it contributes to a low standard of living. It is therefore necessary to shift some of the rural population to the towns and employ it in commerce and industry. The Polish peasants were eager to improve their lot in this way by becoming small shopkeepers, tradesmen, craftsmen, etc. They could not, however, achieve their ambition. The retail trade, a large section of industry and of the liberal professions were controlled by the Jews who lived in the towns, and practically monopolised some branches of trade.

These endeavours of the Polish population to secure some share in the commercial activities of their country and the efforts of the peasant to find employment in towns caused—before the war—friction with the Jews.

As the Jewish problem in Poland has a particularly economic background, it should be dealt with from the economic point of view on an international scale. Since the rural areas of Poland are over-populated, and cannot provide their population with employment, it will be necessary to develop industry and revise the economic structure of the country. The incorporation of the provinces returned to Poland by Germany will also be a great help.

The solution of the problem is in the hands of the Great Powers chiefly Britain and the United States, who can assist the development of Polish industry and help Poland to obtain adequate frontiers in the West. Such measures will go a long way towards solving the Jewish problem in Poland.

FREE POLAND

By J. Barski

The 6th of August 1914 is the true date of the rebirth of free Poland. It was then that the yoke was thrown off by a powerful decision of her spiritual will, embodied in one Man and a band of mad youth utterly devoted to the age-old Ideal, entering the war on Poland's own behalf with unlimited faith in the Nation's Spirit. All that has followed has been only the consequence of this fact.

Nothing could be more mistaken, from the inner point of view, than those foreign opinions that it was the Treaty of Versailles which recreated Poland—"a sudden happy turn of events." What nonsense! No turn of outer events can save an individual Soul, no outer happenings can create a nation's freedom, they can only give a shape to her own inner force whose power is irresistible. To no outer foreign grace do we owe our independent existence: rather to Polish blood, effort, genius and *will*. Versailles could not but take into account the facts, which in 1918 were: that between the two weakened and faltering Powers, undermined by revolution, each being in a state of utter chaos, *a living nation was rising to its full stature*, and former rulers had recognized her actual independence. No diplomatic conference could deny facts, and if President Wilson's immortal 14 points were there, they took second place, but the first was Polish will and most important action.

Poland's independent existence began with struggle in self-defence. The frontiers were unsettled, the intrigues of yesterday's enemies still active; small neighbours claiming her indisputable territories. (Wilno with its 3 per cent of Lithuanians; Lwów, Cieszyn).

and soon the Russian troops advancing from the east. Devastated, exhausted, ruined, with her economic, agricultural and administrative system completely disorganized, Poland faced tasks of such magnitude that they would have baffled any nation, and we do not think any other in the world could have done better in a shorter period of time than Poland has done. To understand the extent of the effort, to see rightly her achievements, one must clearly bear in mind some facts :

1. Five-sixth of Poland's land was devastated by war operations, worse than Belgium and France (the loss in buildings was estimated at 330 million dollars in gold. Over 1,800,000 buildings were destroyed in towns and villages as well as one-half of the bridges, station-buildings, and railway workshops ; the railway rolling stock from all central Poland had been removed, and over a million of the population with all their property. Yet no reparations were allotted to her).

2. Agriculture ruined : 11 million acres of land out of use ; 15 million acres of forest destroyed.

3. Industries at a complete standstill (machinery and all other equipment taken by one or the other of the retreating occupants. The total loss of industries has been estimated at 10,000 million gold francs).

4. The monetary system profoundly disorganized, (6 different currencies in circulation, and the menace of inflation, which was soon to become a fact and to influence the next years of national economy.)

5. Four different systems of administration, all greatly disorganized ; four Codes of Law ; no Constitution.

6. Chaos in education (with the exception of the part formerly under Austria) ; 34% illiteracy in the villages of

Poland ruled by Russia, not one Polish University or Academy (except Cracow and Lwów).

7. Physical and nervous exhaustion from four years of privations, misery, persecutions, and war shocks; 20% of children rickety or consumptive from lack of nourishment; unimaginable impoverishment of all classes (626,000 destitute people on State support; 750,000 orphans; 2 million unemployed).

8. The army nearly non-existent: the Pilsudski Legions disorganised by German prisons and concentration camps, the troops fighting in France not yet returned. Soldiers from the three armies just coming home. No equipment; almost no arms or ammunition. No police force.

9. Some psychological traces of a century of abnormal life; lack of confidence in the nation's own innate power; atavistic distrust and bitterness in political matters, individualistic ideas and passions strong. Anxiety in the hearts of the best men as to what will be the face of this beloved country, longed for through generations, will her features fulfil their cherished dreams?

In these conditions the existence of the reborn Polish State began. To heal, to rebuild, remould, recreate, with the greatest possible speed every domain of its life, was it not a gigantic task?

Can we imagine the tremendous amount of energy, skill, effort, self-sacrifice, goodwill and patriotism needed to cope with the task?

Mr. C. Phillips¹ says: "Why is it that Poland has not gone under in 1918? Was there any country riper for a

¹ Mr Charles Phillips was the representative of the American Red Cross in Poland during the difficult years 1918-22. He wrote an interesting book, *The New Poland*

revolt and total collapse than Poland. starved, outraged to the point of madness ? What was it that kept her sane and held her together in a sort of miraculous integrity ? She had the spirit of "come back" in her strong. She was like young David busy with more than one Goliath. The sufferings of the Poles at times simply appal one. But even at their worst you were forced to forget them in the face of the energy and buoyancy of these people. You inhaled all about you the bracing air of 'things doing.'

Yes, the Poles rose to the occasion. The intoxicating joy of freedom regained, doubled and tripled their energies, it was like a flood-burst of energy after a long damming up. They proved that their skill and capacities in the work of building and organizing their country were no less than their heroism had been in the struggles for her independence.

What has been achieved ?

In less than six months the army was organized anew. hundreds of thousands of volunteers, workmen and peasants as well as intellectuals were flocking to defend the frontiers in the Polish-Bolshevik war, ending with the brilliant victory of Polish genius and strategy, embodied in Marshal Pilsudski ; and at the Treaty of Riga, March 1921, by the common agreement of the Soviet and Poland's representatives her eastern frontiers were defined, (ratified by the Council of Ambassadors in 1923). Historically and culturally Poland had a full right to push them farther east and this was recognised by the first government of free Russia as well as by Lenin. If she did not try to do so, it was not the result of her weakness, but of her moderation and goodwill. Wilno and Lwów had been defended. Cieszyn had been unfortunately lost, spoiling relations with the Czechs for twenty years.

The Constitution prepared by a Legislative Assembly, called by Pilsudski and founded on the "freest and most democratic franchise possible,"¹ was voted in 1921 (amended in 1935). Polish currency* was introduced. A unified Polish Code of Law was established, after long and extensive work, by the best lawyers. The administration was completely reorganised; agriculture, trade and industries revived developing with astonishing speed; the new marvellous port of Gdynia was built, as well as hitherto non-existent Merchant Marine (in 1937 it possessed 490 ships now fighting on the side of Britain), and a Navy and Air Fleet. The Central Industrial District was organized on an imposing scale. More and more Polish products and manufactures were exported and appreciated in other countries. Every part of the economic and industrial life was renewed and reconstructed so well that Americans who knew Poland in 1919 could not recognize her in 1929; and the progress and expansion of the last ten years was still greater, prosperity increasing, unemployment diminishing every year.

Education was most vigorously fostered from the first moment of independence; 15 per cent of the yearly budget was reserved for it. Scientific and cultural institutions were developing splendidly in all the chief cities. In 1938 there were about 190 big scientific libraries; innumerable were the smaller literary ones, as Poles of all classes love reading. New big institutions were established, like the Radium Institute founded by Mme. Curie-Sklodowska; the newest, marvellously endowed Physics Institute; (both taken to Germany with all their installations in 1939). "The Institute of Research in East European Problems," "The Institute of

1 C. Phillips.

Investigation of national and social problems," the Institute of Social Economy, of Rural Sociology, of Rural Culture, etc., etc. The chief minorities of Poland had their own well-prospering scientific institutions? Museums were opened, about 180 scientific and academic museums, and 90 art galleries were started.

The Academy of Polish Literature was founded in 1933 and was doing, with the Polish P.E.N. Club, much good work. Literature, already rich, was continually vivified by new original and virile talent, a large part of which was feminine. Dramatic art flourished, and its standard was regarded by foreign critics as amongst the highest in Europe. Warsaw alone had thirteen permanent theatres and three schools of dramatic art; one of them most interesting, the "Experimental Institute Reduta," with spiritual ideals, a community life, and a peculiar discipline like that of a kind of religious-artistic monastic order, the best actors were its pupils.

Plastic art, sculpture and architecture, as well as music, were rich in fresh and outstanding talent. One may say that every field of Poland's life was blossoming, and pulsing with creative life. The prisons were reformed; industrial training, art, lectures and concerts were introduced in them. Courts for juveniles and special clubs and schools for them were established. Hundreds of health and physical culture centres were started as well as hospitals and sanatoriums; mortality gradually decreased, health and vigour improved greatly. The birth-rate was the highest (after Bulgaria) in Europe—1.3 p.c. (Japan 1.5; Germany 0.8; U.S.A. 0.6; Britain 0.4). In twenty years the increase in population was six million.

In the domain of social reform much has been achieved. Not only was Poland one of the first in Europe to introduce, by legislation, the 8-hour day and paid yearly vacations, but

also the progressive protection of the labour of women and juveniles, with a post of woman Inspectors in the Ministry of Labour. Well-organized social insurance schemes (a special Labour Fund), under which no one unemployed of the manual or intellectual working class was without permanent help. Social Aid took care of disabled youth and adults, and of the poor and destitute, combating begging, prostitution, etc. Warsaw Women's Police under the lead of a prominent, spiritually-minded woman, was found the best in Europe by a League of Nations delegate. Co-operative Societies as well as Trade Unions developed vigorously in towns and villages (the turnovers of agricultural co-operatives were, in 1933, 400 million ; in 1938, 750 million).

But the most remarkable results have been achieved in the education of the masses. Original methods were introduced in the night schools ; Rural Universities were started for peasants (according to specialists the best in Europe after Sweden and Denmark), and Universities for workmen in the towns ; posts of Cultural Instructors were created, helping the youth of the villages to organize and to develop freely, under their own initiative, social group-studies, clubs, amateur theatres, sports, etc. When one of our educational workers was sent abroad, by the Ministry, to study the corresponding institutions in other countries, she visited nearly the whole of Europe, and found only in the then socialistic Spain and democratic Sweden the same fresh, vigorous breath of new ideas of a new approach to the "*masses*" based on *reverence for human dignity and confidence in the unlimited potentialities of every individual*, irrespective of class and social status. Educational institutions breathing this new spirit were of tremendous value to the life of Poland. A new type of a free, nationally conscious, responsible, idealistic

young citizen was developing, with a keen sense of national solidarity, proud patriotism, and at the same time interest in world affairs. It is this youth, together with the best Polish intellectuals, that is now upholding Polish honour and leading an unabated struggle with the Nazis in the underground movement.

The most interesting achievements were seen in the artistic domain. Not only has a new generation of writers, poets and novelists, from the peasant and working classes been born, enriching with accents of peculiar vigour and robust individuality the already rich Polish literature ; but the dramas and representations used as a *method of development* in schools, cultural and educational institutions and educational institutions and village-clubs have proved to be the best for the Polish temperament. There was an Association of Popular Theatres in Warsaw, working idealistically and creatively, helping the village youth in all artistic matters. While speaking of the education of the masses, one must mention the salutary influence of military service on the education of the peasant youth. Rightly to appreciate the character of the Polish army and its spirit, one must remember that it was created out of idealistic, consciously patriotic and self-sacrificing volunteers. It had always far more of the spirit of ancient chivalry than modern militarism ; it was also a school of character and of citizenship. Education in the army and cultural clubs for soldiers, under the leadership of girl-instructors, were well organized and ably led. In this field, as in many others, women did invaluable service. Organizations of women of all classes developed splendidly during those twenty years as well as their civic work. Poland was one of the first to create manuals and introduce in all educational institutions the study of the *science of citizenship*.

We may ask what were the still deeper, the spiritual tasks before Poland, and how has she fulfilled them ?

The spiritual pioneers of the nation were aware of the paramount need of a new Ideal, able to inspire and guide the whole nation when her previous age-long ideal—Independence—had been achieved ; and they were seeking it, with all the intensity of the ideal-thirsty, passionate hearts, but it was not an easy task. If to give expression to any new aspect of Life, to shape any new image of the Nation's Truth, nothing short of a genius is needed, in this case, in this historical moment, even genius could hardly have sufficed.

Although Poland's history was following a different trend from that of all her sister-nations of Europe, her life was intimately interwoven with theirs, and all the tremendous problems of modern humanity were facing and perplexing her in the same degree as other countries ; perhaps in an even more poignant and immediate way, for Poland was situated not only physically between two Powers which had been her enemies, but also between two systems of thought, two extremes of fanatical ideologies, ruthlessly put into experimental practice ; living on the cross-road of currents seemingly so different, yet in many ways proving similarly destructive : both equally denying in practice the principle which formed the intrinsic value of Poland's culture—freedom of the individual and spirituality. All her inner and outer work was going on under a tremendous strain, in a higher temperature as it were, bearing the continual insidious pressure from both sides. Poland's own Ideal has always been utterly different. Never could she worship the State as a goal in itself. She regarded it always as a means to aid the all-round development of the individual. Methods of terrorism, of class

hatred, of extermination of one part of society to free another, have been completely foreign to the Polish genius.

The immediate aspect of her Ideal has been best defined by her greatest leader in one of his frank private talks : "The creation of a new type of man, a free yet self-disciplined, idealistic citizen, who could harmonize in himself the two extremes never well enough balanced in Polish history—robust independent individuality and conscious, voluntary submission to authority—and co-operate with the State in full creative responsibility." It was a broad, synthetic Ideal, able to guide all the earnest strivings of a nation in a peaceful era of history, but—and here lay the tragedy—not dramatic, dynamic or even spectacular enough to catch the imagination of the youth of our age, and to inflame it with a new impetus to action, in these days of revolutionary changes and upheavals. The same phenomenon was seen in other western countries, which failed in the same way. To follow the middle path in such times is the most difficult, perhaps an impossible task.

Could Poland have done the impossible ? Could she, in spite of her much more complicated situation, have risen to express a spiritual Ideal in the social domain, to have evolved at least the first vestiges of a different social order, based on self-sacrifice and co-operation instead of hatred and wrong, with an almost religious touch, according to her own Social Conscience ? Who would dare to say ?

Yet it is a fact that many in the nation were well aware that Poland could stand only through moral force. In 1932 one of the writers on new ideas of citizenship wrote : "A greater inner effort now awaits Poland than at any previous time, if she is to withstand the raging storm and remain *herself* on the paths of history. She must labour to create her

own forms of life, in accordance with her own individual ideology. The times approaching will call for the highest moral values from the whole Polish nation : 'steel souls' she *must* create. Poland will certainly solve all the structural and social problems in her own way, without being afraid of the most radical and drastic measures, if these are the outcome of the Polish genius, of Poland's own creative thought." The author could not foresee what catastrophe will contribute to create these " steel souls."

It is also a fact that numerous were those who laboured in this spirit in their respective fields with unceasing zeal, individuals as well as organized groups. Here and there signs were visible of this new force, unmistakable promises of the future achievement, towards which the nation was slowly advancing in toil and creative effort.

Could she have attained it in a few more years of uninterrupted unfoldment ? We can hardly answer the question. Perhaps. But her inner and outer enemies were strong. The catastrophe of 1939 was hanging long before its last condensation. The majority, even of the leading men, was overwhelmed by such an elementary joy of visible creation, such a passionate desire for health and vigour, that it forgot, or even denied, the peculiarity of Poland's spiritual path and its graver duty. Vision was dimmed, the proportions of things confused, in the last years before the war, and several of our thinkers ascribe to this state of mind some of our errors of that period. (The recognition of Abyssinia's conquest ; the recapture of Cieszyn and Jaworzyna from the Czechs in a moment which should never have been exploited by the chivalrous hand of Poland, however just in themselves her claims to those territories may have been.)

If we are asked in what Poland has succeeded, in what has she failed during these twenty years, we will answer that in all creative building, expanding and organizing of her visible life, she succeeded remarkably, marvellously, beyond all expectation.

In the psychological sphere she failed : in the total eradication of all traces of her long slavery, and in achieving a *psychologically* harmonious solution of the minority problem, though, besides the fact that the minorities enjoyed more rights in Poland than in any other country of central and eastern Europe, many broad-minded attempts had been made.

Spiritually she was on the way to finding her own inner path, the new aspect of her Ideal, and she was diving deep indeed—the efforts of her vanguard were worthy of all honour ; yet she has not been able to reveal fully the face of her inner Individuality.

Does it mean that if weighed in the balance her failures would outweigh her achievements ? Certainly not. No nation or individual can be expected to live and compress into twenty years the experiences that others took a hundred and fifty years to assimilate. And if we compare the spiritual work done, as well as the progressive steps, initiatives, measures and achievements of Poland, during those years, with that of many of her European colleagues we shall see that on the whole she was still *in the first rank of Humanity's units*.

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